

At the National Academy of Sciences, Diane Tuft Presents Photographic Postcards From the Edge of Climate Change

Tuft's "environmental fine art photography" might seem a little pretentious, but it's stunning.

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"The Arctic Melt, Greenland Sea, Arctic Ocean, 4:48 PM, 79 degrees N" (2015)DIANE TUFT

It kind of undercuts a *cri de coeur* about global warming's impact on the Arctic when the photographer describes their work as "environmental fine art photography." In **Diane Tuft's** case, though, it's worth looking past the pretensions of the label.

Tuft traveled to Svalbard, Norway, the Arctic Ocean, and Greenland during the summers of 2015 and 2016 to photograph the region's slowly melting ice. A handful of her large-scale images are on view at the National Academy of Sciences; each finds subtle details that underscore the fragility of the region, which is projected to be ice-free sometime between 2040 and 2058.

Seen up close, ice surfaces provide Tuft with varied visual possibilities. In some images, the surfaces suggest undulating cake frosting; in others, they echo a sandstone cave carved by the wind. In one image, the elemental patterns of the Arctic suggest a **Barnett Newman** zip painting.

Beauty is one thing; Tuft's most urgent images show the rapid dissolution of the landscape.

In one photograph, a sweeping arch of ice weeps a thin curtain of melted droplets. In another, blocks of ice lie submerged in unnaturally blue-green water, waiting to become liquid themselves.

And in a third, a seemingly solid-looking ice sheet dissipates into a mosaic of fragments floating on the inky black sea; upon a closer look, even the ice sheet itself contains subtle cracks that will inexorably lead to the creation of other shards.

In Tuft's pitiless universe, the signs of life are hard to spot. In one photograph, crevasses crisscross icebergs shaded in hues of sky blue and sherbet green. The relief comes when you realize that one seeming crack is actually the wings and body of a soaring gull.

*Through Feb. 20 at the National Academy of Sciences, 2101 Constitution Ave., N.W.
Free.*